

PRELIMINARY SYLLABUS

BIST390EA: Pauline Psychagogy: Spiritual Formation
& Pastoral Care in Early Christian Communities

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Course Description

The ground-breaking work of the New Perspective on Paul opens up new ways of understanding Paul's mission as the apostle to the gentiles. Paul applies the psychagogic (soul-guidance) practices as used by Hellenistic moral philosophers to guide Christ-believers into a life of moral and spiritual completeness. This seminar analyzes Paul's psychagogy in his letters to communities by comparing them with the practices as found in Cynics, Stoics and Epicureans.

Required Texts

NOTE: I still need to balance the amount of reading – remove some and perhaps add some articles to the course reader.

Bible

Romans, I & II Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon

NOTE: You should already be familiar with the letters of Paul. Read these texts again and be aware of content, structure, as well as major issues.

Recording

Johnson, Luke Timothy. Teaching Company. *Practical Philosophy: The Greco-Roman Moralists*. Chantilly, Va.: Teaching Co., 2002. Sound Recording.

NOTE: These lectures are available in DVD, VHS, CD, and cassette. They may also be available in print format. Students are encouraged to contact each other and try to share the expense. It is also possible to obtain this through interlibrary loan. If this is too difficult for you to obtain, contact me and I can assign readings as a substitute.

Books

Gager, John G. *Reinventing Paul*. Oxford: New York, 2000.

Short but good introduction to the issues in current New Perspective on Paul approach.

Malherbe, Abraham. *Moral Exhortation: A Greco-Roman Sourcebook*. 1st ed, *Library of Early Christianity*; 4. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986.

Excerpts from the primary literature. I may not use this and provide texts that are public domain.

Malherbe, Abraham. *Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophic Tradition of Pastoral Care*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.

Small paperback, great introduction to psychagogy (yes, he uses the word).

Meeks, Wayne A. *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*. 2nd ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.

This will give us a frame of reference for understanding Paul. It will largely function as background and context for our work. If you've already read it, I can recommend another text.

Nussbaum, Martha. *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*: Princeton University Press, 1994.

As you can tell, this is not a text on Paul or early Christianity. Nussbaum describes what it would have been like if a woman had participated in each of the philosophical schools.

Course Reader

Fitzgerald, John T. *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel: An Examination of the Catalogues of Hardships in the Corinthian Correspondence*. Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1988. (pp. 47-116)

This section describes the image of the philosopher/sage in ancient Greece and Rome.

Glad, Clarence E. *Paul and Philodemus: Adaptability in Epicurean and Early Christian Psychagogy*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum; V. 81. Leiden: New York, 1995. (pp. 17-43; 185-212)

Clarence and I were at Brown together. His work on psychagogy is currently the most complete treatment of it in relation to Epicureanism and in the works of Philodemus recovered from Herculaneum.

Hadot, Ilsetraut. "The Spiritual Guide." In *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman*, edited by A. H. Armstrong, 436-59. New York: Crossroad, 1986. (pp. 436-459)

Her work was ground-breaking and this is the only work of hers in English.

Stowers, Stanley K. *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994. (pp. 1-82)

Stan was my mentor at Brown. His introduction to Romans describes a method for reading texts and for understanding Paul in the first century context.

Online

Stowers, Stanley K. *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*. 1st ed, *Library of Early Christianity*; 5. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986.

I have permission from Stan to use this material for students free of cost. I have taken the text of one of the final drafts of this book and adapted it as a hypertext (web pages). It will be available within the Moodle course site.

Selections from: Musonius Rufus, Seneca, Epictetus, Cicero, Epicurus, Lucretius, Philodemus, Plutarch

I will have works or selections of works from these philosophers available in the Moodle site. These will focus on specific descriptions of the practice of psychagogy and to issues similar to those in the letters of Paul.

Course Overview

- Understand how psychagogy functioned in philosophical schools.
 - What is each school's approach to helping people achieve the goal of human life?
 - What is the place for the philosopher in society? Should one retreat from society or is the philosophical practice to have an influence on society?
 - Does one extirpate the passions or moderate them? What are the virtues and vices? What are the practices that help someone attain happiness (eudaimonia)?

- What is the role of gods/God and how does philosophy relate to a divine life, blessedness, or a life after death?
- How do we understand Paul's mission to the gentiles within the Greco-Roman context?
 - Instead of thinking of Paul as a Jewish rabbi in the tradition of rabbinic Judaism following the destruction of Jerusalem and the defeat of the Bar Kochba revolt, we are going to place Paul in the context of hellenistic Judaism (Josephus, Philo, 4th Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, Ben Sirach, etc.)
 - What is Paul doing when he preaches about Christ and organizes people into communities centered in a household?
- Study of Paul's letters in the first century context
 - A fresh reading of Paul needs to bracket out our reading back into Paul the accumulation of tradition and theology and compare Paul's practice with the practice of others contemporaneous with him.
 - How do the letters that Paul wrote function for the community? What's their purpose? What is it that he wants people to do?
 - Instead of asking what Paul wants them to believe, we will investigate how those contexts actually stress conduct and character.
 - What goal does Paul set for himself and for followers of Christ and how is that attained? Is it different or substantially different than philosophical schools?
- How does this understanding of Paul affect the way we minister to people?
 - Spirituality finds its roots in the spiritual practices of monasticism. But those spiritual practices are based in philosophical practices. How can we connect Pauline psychagogy to contemporary practices of spiritual guidance?
 - Pastoral care involves methods and practices of modern psychology. Some current counseling practices have their roots in ancient philosophy.
 - Cognitive-behavioral therapy
 - Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy (REBT) – Albert Ellis
 - There has been a renewed interest in philosophy as helping people learn how to live life rather than a historical or analytical discipline.
 - Clinical philosophy: eg. Plato Not Prozac, Lou Marinoff
 - How does this all tie into a way of reading Paul's letters that root our ways of ministering to people to what is in some ways a rediscovery of Christian practice?

Course structure

- Before the two-week intensive
 - Read required texts and listen to the lecture series
 - Check the Moodle course site for any revisions and to discuss any issues that arise before the class time.
- Classroom
 - Work through the course overview through lecture and discussion
 - Re-read whatever you need to be fresh and clear.
 - Specific passages in Paul's letters will be used to focus discussion on a close reading of his text with careful exegesis. Students should make use of Bible software to facilitate comparison of words and concepts in Paul.
 - Students will be asked to lead short sessions on specific issues or texts.

- Students will choose (in consultation with the instructor) a text or topic for an integrative paper connecting Paul to philosophical practices which then relate in some way to ministry in whatever is the students' primary area of interest (spirituality, pastoral care, pastoral ministry, etc.).
- At the end of the two weeks students will submit an outline or description of the final project in consultation with the instructor.
- Following the two-week intensive
 - Students will write the integrative paper (15-20 pages) that connects exegetical capabilities, knowledge of Paul's setting in the first century Mediterranean world, aspects of Paul's psychagogic practice, and contemporary principles and practices in ministry (approximately 15% of paper).